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Report on the evaluation function in UNICEF

Summary

The present report is submitted in accordance with Executive Board decision 2004/9 (E/ICEF/2004/7/Rev.1) adopted at the annual session of June 2004, which requested a report on the work of the evaluation function for consideration by the Executive Board at the annual session in 2006.

Following the introduction, chapter I covers the status of the evaluation function in UNICEF. The performance of the evaluation function against the objectives of the work plan 2002-2005 is presented in chapter II. Summaries of evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Office are presented in chapter III. Chapter IV describes the challenges of evaluation in the context of the medium-term strategic plan (MTSP) for 2006-2009.

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I. Introduction

1. During the annual session in 2004, the Executive Board reviewed a progress report on the evaluation function in UNICEF (E/ICEF/2004/11), and in decision 2004/9 (E/ICEF/2004/7/Rev.1), requested a report on the work of the evaluation function for consideration at the annual session in 2006.

2. In that decision, the Executive Board noted that much work remains to be done, including through sharpening the strategic focus of evaluation work plans and improving the efficiency and raising standards of evaluation work. The Board emphasized that the evaluation function should be carried out in consultation with national authorities and in compliance with the decision 2002/9 (E/ICEF/2002/8/Rev.1). UNICEF was encouraged to further strengthen the evaluation function, emphasizing the following: (a) focusing on fewer, high-quality studies, with strong emphasis on analysing effectiveness and results; (b) improving evaluation standards at the country level; (c) accelerating progress towards joint evaluation work; (d) strengthening national evaluation capacity; and (e) identifying best practices and enabling findings to feed systematically into organizational learning.

II. Evaluation in UNICEF

A. The role of the evaluation function in UNICEF

3. The report on the evaluation function in the context of the MTSP for 2002-2005 (E/ICEF/2002/10) was presented during the 2002 annual session of the Executive Board. In decision 2002/9 (E/ICEF/2002/8/Rev.1), the Board endorsed the report as "the policy statement on the evaluation function in UNICEF". Evaluation is one part of UNICEF performance assessment and oversight system, which includes several areas: (a) investigation; (b) internal and external audit; (c) management performance monitoring and reporting; (d) evaluation; and (e) research. Performance monitoring by management, internal audits of management practices, and evaluation of results and impact are the main tools supporting results-based management. Together with research, evaluation is also a primary learning tool to distil lessons for improved programming, strategic planning and policy development. During 2006, UNICEF will review the respective roles of audit and evaluation to ensure greater complementarity.

4. Evaluation is an important function supporting UNICEF in achieving its mission and strategic objectives. Evaluation is essentially about understanding results and their impacts, providing assessments and best practices to inform decision-making. It enables learning-by-doing and improves results-oriented activities by re-engineering ongoing activities or bettering new design. The formative evaluation process is participatory. It is an empowerment tool fostering fairness and impartiality, enlarging the potential for consensus-building. It facilitates learning for stakeholders and the public. Finally, evaluation is about accountability because it focuses on why results are or are not achieved.

B. Management of the evaluation function

5. The evaluation system mirrors the decentralized structure of UNICEF, with distinctive accountability roles articulated at each level. The headquarters Evaluation Office operates within corporate management structures as an independent office. It provides functional leadership and overall management of the evaluation system, and commissions and conducts independent evaluations. Headquarters divisions and offices also undertake evaluations related to their programmatic and operational areas. Regional offices conduct thematic evaluations related to their regional strategies. Each regional office has a senior officer who supports evaluations undertaken by country offices, providing quality assurance. Country offices conduct a great number of evaluations, normally in collaboration with national partners. Regional- and country-level evaluation staff are not part of independent offices. Nevertheless, the conducting of all evaluations must adhere to United Nations norms for independence.

6. The UNICEF Evaluation Committee, chaired by the Executive Director, reviews the evaluation work programme, evaluation reports and management responses, and advises on evaluation-related matters.

C. Scope and quality of the evaluation system

7. As of February 2006, 156 professional staff were acting as focal points for evaluation, most of them devoting a portion of their time to these duties. The seven regional monitoring and evaluation officers allocated some 20 per cent of their time to evaluation. Professional posts that included evaluation existed in 63 country offices. The table below shows changes between December 2002 and February 2006 in the number of evaluation professionals at level 3 posts[1] and higher, and includes a breakdown by gender.

Evaluation professionals:	48 (2002); 68 (2006)	Growth: 42%
International professionals:	33 (2002); 45 (2006)	Growth: 36%
National professionals:	15 (2002); 23 (2006)	Growth: 53%
Percentage in field offices:	79% (2002); 82% (2006)	Growth: 4%
Male/female ratio:	25:23 (2002);41:27(2006)	Absolute growth: +16/+4
% female professionals:	48% (2002); 40% (2006)	Relative growth: -12.5%

8. Since 2002, UNICEF has increased the level of professional monitoring and evaluation staff. Nevertheless, approximately two thirds of UNICEF offices do not have a monitoring and evaluation officer at a level 3 or higher and are therefore less able to consistently deliver high-quality evaluations. Most such offices are small and/or have resource constraints. In small offices a level-3 monitoring and evaluation professional would be considered a senior officer. Such offices do, however, have the option to call upon the regional office and national institutions for professional support. Regarding gender parity, the table indicates that while the number of female professionals in this area has grown, it lags behind that of

[1] Level 3 is the desired minimum level to ensure systemic competence.

professional males. Gender parity will require recruitment attention in coming years. While UNICEF has placed a higher percentage of monitoring and evaluation posts in country offices, needs are still unmet both in headquarters and regional offices.

9. In compliance with the Board request to be more selective in conducting evaluations, UNICEF reduced the number of evaluations by 18 per cent and studies by 26 per cent from 2002-2006, according to data on evaluations, studies and surveys[2] conducted in the country offices, as indicated below:

2002: 357 evaluations; 877 studies and surveys
2003: 308 evaluations; 895 studies and surveys
2004: 295 evaluations; 685 studies and surveys
2005: 291 evaluations; 649 studies and surveys
Total: 1,251 evaluations; 3,106 studies and surveys

10. The average office conducts two evaluations and five studies and surveys a year, permitting most programmes to be evaluated once during a programme cycle, an important requirement for strategic decision-taking. Evaluation utility depends to a great extent on quality, the improvement of which is an organizational goal. Using a quality-review system modelled on the evaluation norms of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the average quality rating (on a 5-point scale) increased from 2.24 in 2002 to 2.49 in 2004. Ratings from a smaller set of 2005 evaluations show an increase to an average of 2.80. These improvements over just two years indicate that quality enhancement efforts are taking hold, even though there is still much room for improvement.

11. The financial investment in evaluation is hard to calculate, since UNICEF information systems do not capture evaluation spending perfectly. Since the information system coding was refined in 2006, more precise data will be reported in coming years. What is known is the following:

(a) UNICEF undertakes nearly 1,000 studies, surveys, and evaluations per year;

(b) Evaluation resources are scarcer for the more expensive evaluations, including corporate-level evaluations, multi-country regional evaluations, and country programme evaluations;

(c) Donors are willing to fund baseline surveys and evaluations when contributing other resources. Donor-funded efforts usually do not face implementation constraints, but quality may be less than desired if the country office does not have a fully skilled staff;

(d) Nearly one third of UNICEF evaluations are poor,[3] and major improvements and value for money can be gained by enhancing quality.

12. In 2003, the Evaluation Office had 4 professional and 3 support positions; in 2004, 5 professional and 3 support positions; and in 2005, 6 professional and 3 support positions. The Evaluation Office is grateful that the Department for

[2] Studies and surveys often create baselines for later evaluations.

[3] As reported in the 2004 progress report (E/ICEF/2004/11).

International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom provided other resources for country programme evaluations and real-time evaluations in 2004-2005 and that France has sponsored a Junior Professional Officer post as of 2005. The table below summarizes the financial resources made available to the Evaluation Office.

	2004*	2005*	2006**	2007**
Support budget – staff costs	1,131,161	1,188,400	1,240,805	1,290,912
Support budget – consultants, temporary fixed-terms	60,375	149,208	234,195	244,088
Regular resources	222,350	219,168	445,000	445,000
Other resources – tsunami evaluation	-	311,034	931,268	1,018,826
Other resources/DFID – Humanitarian assistance in 2004-2005; Real-time evaluation in 2006-2007	17,038	507,427	203,593	363,793
Other resources – Evaluation strengthening and country programme evaluations (Note: For 2006-2007, there is authorization to seek funding; funds not yet obtained)	266,515	273,607	3,124,938	3,130,794
Other resources – Human Security Trust Fund	-	49,155	-	-
Total	**1,697,439**	**2,697,999**	**6,179,799**	**6,493,413**

* Expenditures.
** Allocations.

D. Self-assessment of the UNICEF evaluation function

13. The United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) endorsed Norms and Standards for evaluation in the United Nations system in 2005. They are a critical achievement of harmonization and a positive step towards the professionalization of evaluation in the United Nations system. UNICEF led their development.

14. The Evaluation Office conducted a self-assessment using UNEG Norms and Standards, which identified several main strengths of UNICEF: technical evaluation capabilities; intellectual independence; management of strategic evaluations; credibility to clients; participatory and human rights-based approaches; and gender-balanced evaluation teams. The principal weaknesses identified were the limited availability of human and financial resources; limited evidence that evaluation findings are used; inconsistent distillation of lessons learned; and limited opportunity for professional development activities.

15. In most respects, UNICEF performance resembles that of other United Nations agencies. A 2005 report prepared by UNEG[4] found a consistently positive assessment of evaluator competencies and methodological rigor among the agencies. No agency was found to comply fully with the institutional framework and independence standards. Management follow-up and quality assurance processes were found consistently weak. UNICEF, however, was seen to be one of the few agencies moving towards a corporate quality assurance system. UNICEF and other agencies with decentralized evaluation systems — the United Nations Development Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and the

[4] UNEG Task Force on 'Quality Stamp' for Evaluation - Baseline Synopsis of UNEG Members, December 2005.

World Food Programme (WFP) — are facing challenges in tracking the effectiveness of field-level evaluations. For all agencies, distilling and employing lessons learned was the most underexploited area. UNICEF is updating its Executive Directive on evaluation, which will clarify positions on independence and other topics.

E. Peer Review of the UNICEF evaluation function

16. A Peer Review exercise to assess the UNICEF evaluation function was initiated in September 2005 by the Evaluation Network of OECD/DAC. The Review is led by a Peer Panel, chaired by Canada, and comprises senior evaluators from Canada, Ireland and Norway; the Directors of the Evaluation Offices of the African Development Bank and of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization; and an evaluation expert from Ghana. Two consultant/advisers have assisted the Panel. The Peer Panel is considering three main aspects of the UNICEF evaluation function: the *independence* of the evaluation system; the *credibility* of the evaluation process and evaluation reports; and the *use of evaluation evidence*. While the Peer Panel has focused mainly on the central evaluation function, it has also reviewed the UNICEF decentralized evaluation system through document reviews and interviews, and the use of Ghana as a country reference case.

17. The Peer Panel will assume direct responsibility for the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the review. The Peer Review report, due in April 2006, will be made available to the Executive Board together with the UNICEF management response.

III. Performance against the evaluation work plan 2002-2005

A. 2002-2005 initial orientation and MTSP-related adjustments

18. The 2002 report on the evaluation function outlined two priorities: (a) strengthen the evaluation function throughout UNICEF; and (b) implement a multi-year evaluation plan in support of the MTSP. Executive Board decision 2002/9 added an emphasis on capacity-building in programme countries. The 2004 progress report on the evaluation function (E/ICEF/2004/11) demonstrated steps taken to implement the 2002 Board decision.

19. In 2005, the UNICEF evaluation function engaged in the development process for the MTSP for 2006-2009, which identified six areas of evaluation work: (a) execute evaluations related to MTSP focus areas, strategies, and operational effectiveness; (b) strengthen evaluation within the United Nations system and with other partners; (c) support national capacity-building and strengthen national leadership in country-level evaluations; (d) strengthen evaluation capacity in UNICEF; (e) develop approaches for and conduct evaluations in humanitarian crises; and (f) heighten management attention to the evaluation function.

20. The present report is built around the focus areas of the MTSP for 2006-2009, with special attention paid to themes featured in the 2002 and 2004 evaluation progress reports. Adjustments made to align evaluation with the MTSP focus areas

have been under way since 2004. Since the 2004 progress report focused in depth on the years 2002-2003, this report concentrates more on the years 2004-2005.

B. Corporate evaluations in support of the MTSP

21. Corporate evaluations have a scope that is of interest to the whole organization and have systemic implications. In 2002, the four-year evaluation plan included 21 corporate evaluations to be conducted by the Evaluation Office. As of March 2006, 34 such evaluations had been completed, and 7 were under way. A breakdown of evaluations planned, delivered, under way, and not done is as follows:

(a) Evaluations of organizational priorities: 11 planned; 11 delivered; 1 under way; 4 not done;

(b) Corporate functions (now called organizational performance): 5 planned; 10 delivered; 3 under way; 1 not done;

(c) Topical evaluations (cross-cutting themes, including humanitarian crises efforts): 5 planned; 13 delivered; 3 under way;

(d) In addition, 7 country programme evaluations and 2 real-time evaluations were conducted.

22. The total effort significantly exceeded the plan. Performance exceeded the plan by 160 per cent for organizational performance evaluations, and by 220 per cent for topical evaluations. Postponement of evaluations was due to lack of resources. Cancellation occurred when it became evident that the topics were research subjects requiring scientific evidence based on data to be collected over years. The results show that the planning process has responded to surging needs. As headquarters has become more aware of the usefulness of evaluations, demand has increased. (For a schedule of planned and completed evaluations, see Annex I.)

23. A global set of evaluations for 2006-2009 is listed in Annex II of the MTSP (E/ICEF/2005/11). These were developed in collaboration with the Evaluation Office by cluster teams in charge of each MTSP focus area. In addition, UNICEF regional offices have been creating regional Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plans.

C. Country programme evaluations (CPEs)

24. In decision 2002/9, the Board confirmed the commitment to strengthen CPEs, which are evaluations at the country level that assess programme results and effectiveness and strategic-level issues. CPEs address all five MTSP focus areas and cross-cutting strategies, including the human rights-based approach, gender equality, and results-based management. The evaluations explicitly aim to assess the degree to which country programmes are helping programme countries realize their MDG commitments. Another aim is to make country programmes more effective in terms of focus, implementation strategies and coordination with United Nations agencies and other development partners. The lack of systematic use of CPEs partly explains deficiencies in the level, depth and scope of the annual mid-term reviews (MTRs) and major evaluations.

25. Since 2001, when the Evaluation Office began piloting a CPE methodology, seven CPEs have been concluded (in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Cambodia, Côte d'Ivoire, Mauritius, Morocco, Pacific Island Countries, and Peru). CPEs have been jointly coordinated among national authorities, the United Nations agencies and other partners. National ownership is a consistent feature, and CPEs have strengthened national evaluation capacities for strategic reviews. The evaluations have also fed into MTRs and evaluations of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and have improved programme design and national policies. The approach taken by UNICEF has proven a valuable contribution to the development of programmatic evaluation as part of United Nations reform, especially within the common country programme approach. Key elements of the approach have been integrated in UNDAF system-wide evaluation guidelines for the penultimate year of the UNDAF cycle. There is a growing demand for CPEs from Country Representatives. UNICEF regional offices were to assume responsibility for CPEs in 2005 but this was not possible because of resource constraints.

D. UNICEF contribution in the United Nations context

26. The UNICEF contribution to the United Nations inter-agency framework extends beyond UNDAF evaluations. UNICEF has also led the UNEG initiative to conduct joint country-level evaluations in response to General Assembly resolution 59/250 of 22 December 2004 following the 2004 triennial comprehensive policy review. These evaluations will assess United Nations contributions to countries' capacities to pursue poverty eradication and sustainable economic development. They will also assess how well United Nations reform efforts are enhancing organizational efficiency. Evaluations will commence in 2006, assessing four areas: (a) the United Nations contribution to national development in terms of the Millennium Development Goals, poverty reduction strategies, trade and development, capacity development, and gender equality; (b) transitional issues in humanitarian relief and development; (c) rights-related normative activities; and (d) the United Nations response to HIV/AIDS at the country level.

27. UNICEF collaboration with UNEG is both broad and strong, reflecting common interests in harmonizing evaluation approaches and professionalizing the United Nations evaluation function. The Evaluation Office has played a proactive role in making UNEG task groups more dynamic and results-oriented, contributing substantively in the following ways:

(a) Taking the lead in drafting the evaluation Norms and Standards;

(b) Formulating the competencies profile for United Nations evaluators;

(c) Preparing the curriculum of a core training programme for United Nations evaluators;

(d) Developing a joint country-level evaluation portfolio, as noted above;

(e) Contributing to the task forces on Results-Based Management and Evaluation, and on Quality Stamp;

(f) Actively sharing knowledge through the United Nations Evaluation Forum electronic network.

28. Field office contributions to United Nations reform include the following:

(a) Leadership within the Common Country Assessment;

(b) Leadership within the UNDAF monitoring and evaluation processes, including the results framework and attached monitoring and evaluation framework;

(c) Support to the UNDAF quality review and results-based management training functions from the regional level;

(d) Engagement in joint evaluations and joint capacity-building efforts.

E. Organizational performance evaluations

29. Organizational performance evaluations look at management processes rather than programme delivery. A schedule of such evaluations for 2004-2005 was planned in 2002-2003. As of February 2006, two exercises were under way: the Strategic Review of Human Resource Management in UNICEF and the Review of Partnerships with Civil Society. The Evaluation of the Supply Function in UNICEF began in March 2006. All are due for 2006 completion.

30. External evaluation firms are hired for these exercises, via open competition. These exercises represent major investments, often above planned budgets. The Evaluation Office has shown its commitment to this portfolio by assigning to it most of the Office's 2006 programme budget. Care is taken in these exercises to develop ownership by key stakeholders who will enable findings and recommendations to be applied. UNICEF staff and partners have shown keen interest in these evaluations. UNICEF senior management is involved through steering groups.

F. Strengthening evaluation in programme countries

31. UNICEF has responded to the Executive Board's call to assist in developing the evaluation capacity of programme countries. The principal strategy is to support national evaluation associations and networks, which contribute to knowledge generation and dissemination of good practices through conferences and training. National ownership of evaluation is promoted through advocacy targeted to policy makers. UNICEF regional and country-level monitoring and evaluation officers are very involved in strengthening evaluation associations.

32. UNICEF has played an instrumental role in the creation of the International Organisation for Cooperation in Evaluation in 2002, the International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS) in 2002, the International Programme Evaluation Network (IPEN) in 2000 in the Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS) region, the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA) in 2000 and the Latin American Evaluation Network (ReLAC) in 2004. During 2005, UNICEF provided technical advice and financial support to the annual conferences of IDEAS in India, IPEN in Kazakhstan and ReLAC in Honduras. The Evaluation Office is presently supporting AfrEA, ReLAC and IDEAS for their 2007 conferences. In an experimental effort at training and certification, UNICEF is providing technical support to ReLAC for the formulation of an Internet Master's Programme in Evaluation for Latin America. UNICEF is also a full member of the

Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action.

33. Major national capacity-building efforts other than those in support of the associations are as follows:

(a) Extensive skills training around the periodic multiple indicator cluster surveys;

(b) Technical support to public sector information systems (e.g., health statistics) and ministerial research and evaluation units using *DevInfo*;

(c) Joining with other United Nations agencies in monitoring and evaluation training efforts;

(d) Increasingly employing local consultant firms and individuals to support the independent private market in evaluation expertise;

(e) Promoting monitoring and evaluation involvement in human rights-based programming;

(f) Using CPEs to strengthen national capacities in strategic evaluation.

G. Evaluation of capacity-building in UNICEF

34. UNICEF is addressing internal capacity gaps identified in the 2000-2001 meta-evaluation of the quality of evaluations, as described in the 2004 progress report on evaluation (E/ICEF/2004/11). The first strategy is to improve management attention and response to evaluations. The organization has taken the following steps:

(a) A first-ever global Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (IMEF) was incorporated in the MTSP for 2006-2009 to identify priority research and evaluations;

(b) Most regions are developing regional IMEFs based on regional management and technical staff inputs;

(c) At least five regions now perform quality reviews of the terms of reference of regional priority evaluations. Several of the regions are setting higher targets so that evaluation reports will be rated as good or higher;

(d) Improved use of, and management response to, evaluations presents a challenge. At the global level, a pilot database to track responses to corporate evaluations was activated in 2005.

35. The second strategy is to improve the technical competencies of UNICEF staff, and action has been taken in the following areas:

(a) All regions are targeting training of monitoring and evaluation staff and regional technical advisors. However, specific learning objectives have not been set, and tools to measure staff monitoring and evaluation capacities have not been completed;

(b) All country offices are receiving support in results-based management training and application, including in UNDAF development, audit preparations,

crisis programming, monitoring and evaluation training, and programme-planning training;

(c) The Evaluation and Research Database has reached a critical mass for quality assessment, feedback, and dissemination. All regions now monitor evaluations using the database quality reviews, and then use the data to promote regional drives for quality;

(d) As noted above, ensuring adequate staffing remains a critical concern. Many country offices cannot afford a monitoring and evaluation officer at all or one at the level they need. While a global screening exercise to identify strong staff candidates has been supportive, it does not address the resource/demand constraints;

(e) There is an unmet need for a Global Help Desk to reply to complex evaluation needs, and resources for this are being sought. Lessons will be drawn from the CEE/CIS region, which is experimenting with a regional help desk.

H. Humanitarian crisis, with a focus on the tsunami response

36. UNICEF has invested heavily in humanitarian crisis evaluations to assess major-crisis responses and organizational capacities. The evaluations are reaching similar conclusions, which are being taken into account in the planning for MTSP implementation and the preparation of new funding proposals.

37. UNICEF is developing an approach and methodology for evaluations that take place shortly after an acute emergency begins. Called real-time evaluations (RTEs), they are of short duration (two to three weeks) and are implemented by joint teams composed of internal and external evaluators. The main objectives are to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the performance of UNICEF and its partners before, during and after a crisis, and to draw lessons for improving immediate performance in a crisis and future work. UNICEF conducted RTEs in Liberia (2004), participated in the inter-agency Darfur exercise (2005), is completing an RTE in response to the Niger food and nutrition crisis, and is participating in an inter-agency RTE on the cluster approach in the United Nations response to the Pakistan earthquake of 2005.

38. Concerning the tsunami response, UNICEF has launched a series of independent evaluations to examine performance and results achieved during the first six-month emergency and relief phase. These RTEs include case studies of the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Indonesia. The synthesis report adds information from all other affected countries. The evaluations are summarized in Part III.

39. In addition, UNICEF actively supports inter-agency evaluation efforts, including the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC). The TEC optimizes sector-wide learning through joint evaluations. UNICEF is a financial contributor and provides sector expertise for individual thematic evaluations. The final TEC report is to be released in June 2006.

40. Looking ahead in the tsunami response, the Evaluation Office, together with regional and country offices, will coordinate UNICEF corporate evaluations. During 2006, there will be thematic evaluations and RTEs of transitional activities in health, education, water and sanitation, preparedness and protection. In 2007, CPEs will examine overall development results as well as the nature of affected populations' vulnerabilities and the extent to which they have been reduced.

IV. Summaries of evaluations completed in 2004-2005

41. This section reports on corporate-level evaluations managed by the Evaluation Office; key field-level evaluations have been reported on annually to the Executive Board by the Regional Directors. The summaries comprise three evaluation clusters: those related to the MTSP for 2002-2005, humanitarian action, and organizational performance. Evaluations in 2002-2003 were summarized in the 2004 progress report on evaluation. The evaluation reports are accessible on the UNICEF evaluation website (www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index.html).

A. Organizational priorities of the MTSP for 2002-2005

42. *Fighting HIV/AIDS: A Strategic Review (2002-2004).* This review, by an independent consultant, was designed to examine UNICEF progress in implementing organizational mechanisms needed to assure programming excellence, and highlighted these findings:

(a) The MTSP 2002-2005 successfully focused UNICEF action around four areas: young people, prevention of mother-to-child transmission, care and support, and orphaned and vulnerable children;

(b) UNICEF does not and cannot work alone in HIV/AIDS. There is a need for multi-faceted partnerships;

(c) The HIV/AIDS unit has pioneered innovative and collaborative management structures;

(d) Improvements are needed in resource mobilization, results-driven resource allocation, alignment of accountability and capacity development of UNICEF staff.

43. Two evaluations conducted by external consultants tested an experimental methodology for measuring risks that interfere with the successful delivery on UNICEF policy commitments: *UNICEF HIV/AIDS Organizational Priority: An Evaluation of the Policy and Enabling Environment (2005)*; and *UNICEF Immunization Plus Organizational Priority: An Evaluation of the Policy and Enabling Environment (2004)*. Actions to overcome the identified risks are to be incorporated into operational performance-improvement objectives. In terms of sustaining an enabling environment, immunization "plus" showed mainly medium risks; HIV/AIDS showed higher risks. Two high-level risks shared by both organizational priorities were in the areas of resource mobilization and human resources. Policy makers need to be more aware of the risks before expanding commitments. Both evaluations were completed in time for the formulation of the MTSP for 2006-2009.

44. *Measuring School Readiness: An Evaluation of the UNICEF and Global Experience (2005)* assessed the lessons learned from programmes and recommended policy directions. The programmes were desk-reviewed, and views were sought from a wide group of international experts. A comparison was made with another major school-readiness measurement approach being used by the World Bank. The findings indicated that the UNICEF-supported approach was not designed for individual student diagnostics. Rather, it worked in areas where group measures were needed for program evaluation; for determining community parent-training

and social infrastructure needs; for assisting curricula development; and for national monitoring. UNICEF, the World Bank, and other partners met in March 2006 to discuss future directions in school-readiness measurement.

45. *Community-based Child Protection Initiatives: Lessons Learned* (to be completed in 2006). This internal review of evaluations from 23 programmes examines how well child protection programmes have engaged community support and participation, in areas covering all parts of the protective environment framework (services, legal protection, social ambience, etc.). The evaluation aims to understand which community engagement strategies work best.

B. Humanitarian action

46. The findings of the *Evaluation of UNICEF Preparedness and Early Response in Iraq*, and the *Joint UNICEF/DFID Evaluation of the UNICEF Response to the Darfur Crisis* were reported to the Executive Board by the Director of the Middle East and North Africa Region in his annual report on mid-term reviews and major evaluations at the second regular session of 2004 (E/ICEF/2004/P/L.33) and 2005 (E/ICEF/2005/P/L.29), respectively. The findings consistently overlap with those reported below.

47. *Real-Time Evaluation: Liberia* (2004). This first pilot to address the UNICEF initial response to major humanitarian crises, addressed two elements: (a) an assessment of the country office's performance in, and regional office and headquarters support to, programme design and management, external relations, and operations management; and (b) considerations for the further development of UNICEF humanitarian response policies. The exercise assessed UNICEF response from May 2003 to March 2004 using the performance expectations established in the Core Corporate Commitments (CCCs) for Children in Emergencies. It was undertaken jointly by the Evaluation Office and the Office of Internal Audit, with support from the regional office. Because of its audit component, the report was classified as an internal document and not released publicly.

48. *Evaluation of DFID-UNICEF Programme of Cooperation to Strengthen UNICEF Programming as It Applies to Humanitarian Response*, 2000-2005; and *Evaluation of UNICEF Learning Strategy to Strengthen Staff Competencies for Humanitarian Response, 2000-2004*. These two evaluations were conducted by external consultant teams to assess UNICEF progress in two phases of the humanitarian capacity-building for humanitarian preparedness and response programme funded by DFID, concluding that DFID should continue to support the programme. A comprehensive management response is being prepared. The evaluations had a direct impact on the design of funding proposals made to DFID and the European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO).

49. Key achievements identified were the following:

(a) Emergency Preparedness and Response Planning was realized in 85 per cent of UNICEF offices;

(b) The CCCs were developed to define what UNICEF will provide for children in a crisis;

(c) Strengthened work in child protection;

(d) Enhanced security management and a 24/7 Operation Centre in New York;

(e) Significant supply improvements, including the establishment of the Emergencies Coordination Unit in Copenhagen and larger stockpiles of emergency items;

(f) Improvement in emergency preparedness in information technology and telecommunications;

(g) Establishment of an Emergency Response Team;

(h) Quicker human resource mobilization for major emergencies through the 'Corporate Trigger'.

50. The evaluation identified several constraints or shortfalls:

(a) Regional office inability to meet heavy oversight demands;

(b) Weak field-level human resources response to ensure quick staff mobilization;

(c) Uneven technical capacity within CCC sectors, especially in water and sanitation;

(d) Lack of consistent identification of strong partners at the planning stage;

(e) Weak understanding of the CCCs in many country offices;

(f) The country offices' frequent failure to update Emergency Preparedness and Response Planning or to practice planned responses;

(g) Weak organizational learning.

51. The initial six-month response to the tsunami emergency was assessed in four evaluations conducted in the last half of 2005: on Maldives, Sri Lanka and Indonesia, and in a Synthesis Report on all affected countries (India, Indonesia Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Somalia and Sri Lanka). The Tsunami Thematic Fund permitted a fast-track effort by 10 independent experts in health, nutrition, education, water and sanitation, child protection, management and logistics. The objectives were to identify major achievements during the December 2004-June 2005 emergency response phase and to highlight response constraints, gaps and future policy implications. Within the evaluative framework of the CCCs, the response was measured against global criteria of relevance, appropriateness, impact, effectiveness and efficiency.

52. The global findings were as follows:

(a) UNICEF overall performance was generally positive. Programming and operations were generally timely, appropriate and relevant, with some opportunities for improvement;

(b) The planned programmes, if achieved, will generate positive developmental outcomes;

(c) Coverage was largely satisfactory (although less so in Aceh);

(d) The best comparative advantage of UNICEF was in dealing with the triple combination of policy work, coordination and sector leadership, and practical implementation. Simpler efforts were often done more effectively by others;

(e) The UNICEF information technology function was a leader in the United Nations family.

53. Sectoral findings were as follows:

(a) *Education*. The CCCs were mostly met. The Back to School campaign was largely successful, with significant UNICEF contributions made to advocacy, supply, temporary schools, and supply teachers. UNICEF performed its lead-agency role well, especially in support of national Governments.

(b) *Child Protection*. UNICEF efforts were satisfactory. The emergency response was quick and vigorous, particularly regarding identification, care, and legal protection activities. Established networks were utilized, and UNICEF assumed its lead role well. International adoption activities were largely prevented. UNICEF psychosocial work was perceived to be important and effective, and included innovative approaches linked to local networks. In some countries, the response made inroads for new efforts to tackle issues such as child abuse.

(c) *Health and nutrition*. UNICEF efforts were generally satisfactory. Excess mortality was avoided, and fast reduction of excess morbidity was accomplished. UNICEF contributions were critical. The distribution of insecticide-treated mosquito nets and Vitamin A had demonstrated impact, as did the large quantity of supplies delivered through national health services.

(d) *Water and environmental sanitation (WES)*. This area represented a challenge. The needs of 1 million homeless were largely met, and most of the affected population were provided access to potable water. However, despite some notable contributions, including sector leadership, the team identified shortcomings in the WES response: no comprehensive WES assessment was carried out, and in some instances the work was slowed because of cumbersome internal procedures and personnel shortages.

54. Overall, the UNICEF response to the tsunami disaster showed that investments in humanitarian response capacity, supported by DFID and ECHO, are reaping benefits. Several issues, as other evaluations have also shown, need to be addressed:

(a) Increasing the participation of affected populations;

(b) Enhancing UNICEF surge capacity;

(c) Improving operational support capacity for efficient and timely responses and the development of an 'Office-in-a-box', including information technology and telecommunications components;

(d) Managing the human resources 'transition gap' between the end of the initial wave of staff deployments and the establishment of longer-term staffing;

(e) Reviewing the finance, administration, operational and programme rules, and also developing streamlined procedures that safeguard UNICEF resources while responding more promptly to partners' operational needs;

(f) Focusing the response more on outcomes and results than on controlling the process;

(g) Disseminating lessons-learning exercises.

55. The team observed that most of the recommendations from this tsunami evaluation repeated findings from past evaluations of UNICEF humanitarian work and proposed that all reports be reviewed so that a comprehensive action plan for improved crisis preparation and response could be produced. The UNICEF Evaluation Committee endorsed this recommendation.

C. Organizational performance

56. *Evaluation of the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre*. The evaluation was conducted in 2004-2005 at the request of the International Advisory Committee of the Innocenti Research Centre (IRC) and undertaken by a team of external and internal evaluators. The evaluation concluded that IRC is uniquely positioned as the only dedicated research centre of UNICEF and as one of the few research institutions focusing on children's issues. IRC should continue research and advocacy in tune with UNICEF priorities while maintaining its independence to remain innovative and critical. IRC should boost its knowledge-brokering role and pursue collaborative research with other institutions. Although there has been some diversification of the resource base, IRC will remain financially fragile without a greater commitment of UNICEF resources. A management response has been prepared.

57. *UNICEF's Use of the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (2000-2004): An Internal Assessment*. The United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security is supported by the Government of Japan to advance the operational impact of human security in programme countries. It is one of the largest trust funds in the United Nations, and UNICEF is the second largest implementing partner. This evaluation was conducted to assess UNICEF activities funded by the Human Security Fund. Japanese partners were consulted and informed throughout the review process, which included field visits to Kenya, Mongolia and Somalia. The assessment concluded that all projects followed the Fund's guidance and contributed to the protection and empowerment of grass-roots stakeholders. Objectives and strategies were compatible with the human rights-based programming approach but less compliant with results-based management principles. Operationally, the Fund has recently improved its project appraisal processes. UNICEF management agreed with the conclusions and recommendations.

58. *Inter-Agency Review of the United Nations Joint Logistics Centre, Synthesis Report (2005)*. This inter-agency review was undertaken by WFP, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNICEF, and OCHA, and was led by WFP, which houses the United Nations Joint Logistics Center (UNJLC). The review synthesized prior reviews of UNJLC operations in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Iraq and Liberia; an external review of the UNJLC Core Unit; and WFP internal reviews of its finance, human resources, information and communication technologies, and procurement relationships with UNJLC. An inter-agency workshop on the results was held in Rome in April 2005. The evaluation found that the UNJLC has an important role as a United Nations common service emergency-response mechanism, and its operations are especially appreciated by

donors, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and non-governmental organizations. The UNJLC should retain its independence and continue filling critical logistics gaps. The early deployment of experienced staff, a critical factor, needs to be strengthened. UNICEF endorsed the recommendations.

59. *Assessment of UNICEF Contribution to United Nations Reform and Its Impact on UNICEF: United Nations Reform Under the United Nations Development Group* (2004). The evaluation, conducted by external evaluators, examined UNICEF engagement in United Nations reform over several years. The report was shared with partners. Internally, the evaluation findings were extensively employed, with a high-level deliberative process. A working group developed responses that are being implemented.

60. The report concluded the following:

(a) UNICEF has made a strong effort to engage in United Nations reform. However, external observers perceive that UNICEF has not consistently used its leadership capacity to promote greater coherence and effectiveness among the United Nations agencies;

(b) UNICEF received substantial credit for contributing to the development of normative approaches such as human rights-based programming, harmonizing UNDAF programming procedures and quality assurance mechanisms;

(c) UNICEF perceives that country-level advances in United Nations reform are largely due to the organization's field capacity and programming knowledge;

(d) UNICEF internal processes have not kept pace with the demands of reform. Weak internal communication has created confusion over organizational intent, and inflexible business processes have increased the workload;

(e) UNICEF remains ambivalent about the value of reform, concerned about the possible loss of independence of action and diluted brand image;

(f) The most compelling recommendation is the need for a clearly articulated long-term vision of where UNICEF will go with United Nations reform.

61. *Assessment of UNICEF's Contribution to United Nations Reform and Its Impact on UNICEF in the Humanitarian Sector* (2004). This companion evaluation had the same objectives, methodology, independence, timing, and institutional mandate. It was separately managed, given the different universe of partners and the much longer history of inter-agency coordination in this area, which pre-dated United Nations reform. Evidence showed that UNICEF had exercised active and effective leadership. UNICEF work straddled the relief-development-environment spheres, and crisis-response-transition phases. Its mandate cut across all sectors. As a result UNICEF was uniquely well suited to, and well served by, playing a coordinating role. Performance constraints included funding shortfalls, finite human resources, key movements of staff, 'coordination fatigue', and external pressure for overintegration. A key gap was a weak advocacy strategy to make the voice of children heard in the political wings of the United Nations and in the Security Council. The evaluation has been employed and responded to in the same fashion as was the preceding evaluation, with different partners in many cases.

62. ***Strengths and Weaknesses of UNICEF (Working Paper, 2004)*** and ***Strengthening Management in UNICEF*** (Working Paper, 2004). The synthesis paper

on strengths and weaknesses examined 17 institutional and global-level reviews and evaluations undertaken between 1992 and 2004. The paper on strengthening management was produced by a former Director of Evaluation. It is an evidence-based aide-mémoire flagging areas for improved management. Both papers were produced as inputs to the process for the MTSP for 2006-2009.

63. Major recommendations from the reviews called for several measures:

(a) Managing with greater emphasis for results in country programmes and emergency response;

(b) Refining the human rights-based approach to programming, given the commitment to results-based management;

(c) Clarifying accountability across all levels;

(d) Lightening the bureaucratic weight on staff;

(e) Creating a more effective Human Resources Management function;

(f) Addressing risks faced by field staff and their dependents;

(g) Re-balancing other resources and regular resources;

(h) Accepting a stronger leadership role for UNICEF in United Nations reform.

V. Evaluation focus and challenges in the context of the MTSP for 2006-2009

64. The MTSP set the priority areas for the evaluation function and encouraged its strengthening, in line with Executive Board decision 2004/9. During 2006-2009, evaluation will focus on six main areas:

(a) National capacity-building and strengthened national leadership in country-level evaluations;

(b) Strengthening evaluation within the United Nations system and with other partners;

(c) Evaluation in humanitarian crises;

(d) Evaluation related to MTSP focus areas, strategies and operational effectiveness;

(e) Strengthening the organizational capacity of UNICEF in evaluation;

(f) Heightened management attention to the evaluation function.

65. Annex II of the MTSP, which summarized the global integrated monitoring, evaluation and research framework for 2006-2009, reflected the effort to choose fewer but more influential evaluations. Table 1 of the Annex listed the evaluations that are planned at the global level for 2006-2009. Implementation of the global framework will present a challenge because of new evaluation methodologies that need to be experimented with and resource constraints. The next biennium will require a more up-front systematic financial planning for evaluations. Regional-level evaluation priorities are being developed by each regional office. A range of

country-level evaluations will continue to be presented to the Executive Board in the annual reports submitted by Regional Directors.

66. A key challenge is to ensure evaluations of quality that yield credibility and institutional learning. This implies a significant effort by all UNICEF offices and divisions. For knowledge creation, evaluation and research will have to sharpen areas of work. The research function needs improved coordination within UNICEF and with partners. Additional efforts and resources will also be required for the distillation and dissemination of best practices. Systemic collaboration between Human Resources, Audit, Evaluation and Research will be necessary to ensure easier access to learning by staff members and partners. For oversight and learning, collaboration among monitoring, audit and evaluation functions will need to be strengthened.

67. Another key challenge is United Nations reform. As UNICEF engages more in joint evaluations, agencies will need to demonstrate a genuine will to work together, and the different organizational cultures and needs of partners will need to be recognized. The active participation of UNICEF in UNEG offers an opportunity for further harmonization and simplification. In this context, the pursuit of country programme evaluation offers the dual challenge of ensuring relevance to programme needs and fostering inter-agency collaboration. The country programme is the most significant unit of measurement for outcome and impact evaluation. Resources must be sought to enable the regional offices to support the conduct of such exercises in the spirit of Executive Board decision 2004/9.

68. A further challenge is the implementation of Board decision 2002/9, emphasizing the importance of preserving the decentralized nature of evaluation, and of General Assembly resolution 59/250 of 17 December 2004 mandating the United Nations system to promote national ownership and capacity development and system-wide progress in collaboration for evaluation. For this to materialize, the evaluation function in UNICEF regional offices needs to be strengthened to enable them to better support country offices. UNICEF also has to support the strengthening of regional evaluation associations in order to further professionalize evaluation at the country level.

69. Finally, there is the challenge of assessing expected results at all levels: at the global level, including through Millennium Development Goals; at the institutional level, through the MTSP; at the country level, through the results matrices of country programme documents and through the UNDAF; and at the project and field activity levels as articulated in logical frameworks. Part of the challenge rests in the fact that results are not always well defined. Nevertheless, evaluation has an important role in analysing those results and in supporting innovation and change management.

Annex

Status of evaluations planned and conducted during 2002-2005

Planned*or added	Title	Status	Comment
Thematic evaluations linked to the MTSP 2002-2005			
1. Planned	Lessons learned from the evaluation of the Joint United Nations programme on HIV/AIDS	Done	Summarized in 2004 report
2. Planned	Method for assessing HIV/AIDS	Done	Methodological investigation
3. Planned	Evaluation of HIV/AIDS behavioural and institutional outcomes	Cancelled	Determined to be a multi-year research, not an evaluation.
4. Added	Evaluation of implementation of HIV/AIDS in year 1 of the MTSP (2002)	Done	Summarized in 2004 report
5. Added	Fighting HIV/AIDS: A strategic review	Done	Summarized in 2006 report
6. Added	The HIV/AIDS organizational priority: An evaluation of the policy and enabling environment	Done	Summarized in 2006 report
7. Planned	Evaluation of selected immunization plus programmes	Emphasis changed	Approach followed is similar to number 6
8. Added	UNICEF's immunization plus organizational priority: An evaluation of the policy and enabling environment	Done	Summarized in 2006 report
9. Planned	Methodology and baseline for IECD case studies	Cancelled	Inadequate resources

10. Planned	Measuring school readiness: An evaluation of UNICEF and Global experience. (Original title: Evaluation of ECD case studies)	Done	Summarized in 2006 report
11. Planned	Evaluation of integrated management of childhood illness case studies	Cancelled	Inadequate resources
12. Planned	African girls education initiative	Done	Summarized in 2004 report
13. Added	Joint evaluation of external support to basic education	Done	Summarized in 2004 report
14. Planned	Education as prevention against child labour	Done	Summarized in 2004 report
15. Planned	Evaluation of mainstreaming child protection in country programmes	Postponed	Contained in 2006-2009 IMEF
16. Planned	Desk review of child protection project review and lessons learned	Under way	To be completed 2006.
Topical evaluations, including humanitarian crisis			
17. Planned	Humanitarian assistance (lessons learned)	Done	Summarized in 2004 report
18. Planned 19. Planned	Emergency capacity building (2 related evaluations)	Done Done	Summarized in 2004 report
20. Planned	Monitoring and evaluation capacity strengthening	Done	Summarized in 2004 report
21. Added	Evaluation of the UNICEF learning strategy to strengthen staff competencies for humanitarian response 2000-2004	Done	Summarized in 2006 report

22. Added	Evaluation of DFID-UNICEF programme of cooperation to strengthen UNICEF programming as it applies to humanitarian response	Done	Summarized in 2006 report
23. Added	Evaluation of UNICEF preparedness and early response in Iraq	Done	Reported to Executive Board in (E/ICEF/2004/P/L.33)
24. Added	Joint UNICEF-DFID evaluation of the UNICEF response to the Darfur crisis	Done	Reported to Executive Board in (E/ICEF/2005/P/L.29)
25. Added	Real-time evaluation for Liberia.	Done	Summarized in 2006 report
26. Added	a. Evaluation of UNICEF tsunami response: Sri Lanka	Done	Summarized in 2006 report
27. Added	b. Evaluation of UNICEF tsunami response: Indonesia	Done	
28. Added	c. Evaluation of UNICEF tsunami response: Maldives	Done	
29. Added	Evaluation of the UNICEF tsunami response: Synthesis report	Done	Summarized in 2006 report
30. Added.	Real-time evaluation: Niger nutrition crisis	Under way	To be completed by May 2006
31. Added	Real-time evaluation: Pakistan earthquake	Under way	To be completed jointly with other UNITED NATIONS agencies in 2006.

32. Planned	Gender mainstreaming in UNICEF (Original title: Gender and discrimination)	Under way	To be completed in 2007
Organizational performance evaluations			
33. Planned	Evaluation of *Child Info* (Original title: Strategic information management systems)	Done	Summarized in 2004 report
34. Planned	Resource mobilization and management	Superseded	Global leverage task force
35. Added	Review of the WHO/UNICEF/UNFPA Coordinating committee on health	Done	Summarized in 2004 report
36. Added	Peer review of the United Nations ombudsman office	Done	Summarized in 2004 report
37. Added	Evaluation of UNICEF's Innocenti research centre	Done	Summarized in 2006 report
38. Added	UNICEF's use of the United Nations trust fund for human security	Done	Summarized in 2006 report
39. Added	Inter-agency review of the United Nations joint logistics center	Done	Summarized in 2006 report
40. Added	Assessment of UNICEF's contribution to United Nations reform and its impact on UNICEF: United Nations reform under the United Nations development group	Done	Summarized in 2006 report
41. Added	Assessment of UNICEF's contribution to United Nations reform and its impact on UNICEF in the humanitarian sector	Done	Summarized in 2006 report

42. Added	Strengths and weaknesses of UNICEF	Done	Summarized in 2006 report
43. Added	Strengthening management in UNICEF	Done	Summarized in 2006 report
44. Planned	Review of UNICEF partnerships with civil society	Under way	To be completed in 2006
45. Planned	Evaluation of UNICEF's supply function	Under way	To be completed in 2006
46. Planned	Strategic review of human resources management in UNICEF	Under way	To be completed in 2006

* Planned = Listed in the Executive Board reports on the evaluation function in 2002 or 2004.

NB: Seven country programme evaluations led by the Evaluation office and two real-time evaluations are not listed. The Regional Directors reported on them to the Executive Board.